

Clay: Useful or Beautiful?

Tempe Center for the Arts

by Mary Erickson, Ph.D.
and graduate student Colette Pecenka

Introduction

The unit was developed in conjunction with a juried exhibition of student work sponsored by the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) opening in January 2009.

[Preview the NCECA Exhibition PowerPoint](#)

Themes

- Theme in Life: We all like and dislike things for different reasons.
- Theme in Art: Ceramic art can be judged both for its usefulness and its visual interest.

Inquiry



What makes one artwork better than another?



How do artists use shapes to add visual interest?

Community Connection

Clay is a kind of soil found all around the world. For thousands of years peoples in the northern Sonoran Desert have made vessels, beads, sculpture and even buildings from local clay. This mini unit explores the work of contemporary clay artists, whose sculptural works have roots in ceramics' utilitarian traditions.

Activities

[Pre-Visit Classroom Activity: Useful, Beautiful or Both? \(pdf\)](#)

[TCA Activity: Exploring the NCECA Exhibition \(pdf\)](#)

[Post-Visit Classroom Activity: Useful and Beautiful Pencil Holder \(pdf\)](#)

[Exploring Clay \(pdf\)](#)

Resources

[Preview the NCECA Exhibition PowerPoint](#)

[Useful, Beautiful or Both? PowerPoint](#)

[Exploring the NCECA exhibition \(pdf\)](#)

[Coil Pencil Holder PowerPoint](#)

[Vocabulary \(pdf\)](#)

Web Resources

[Celebrating Excellence in Ceramics – Secondary ceramics unit](#)
[Pueblo Grande Museum](#)

Credits

Arizona State University Anthropology Museum; Jessica Joganic; Pueblo Grande Museum